



# California Postsecondary Education Commission

770 L Street, Suite 1160 • Sacramento, California 95814

[www.cpec.ca.gov](http://www.cpec.ca.gov) • (916) 445-1000

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Contact

Julia Blair

[JBlair@cpec.ca.gov](mailto:JBlair@cpec.ca.gov) • (916) 445-1000

## Community Colleges: Still an Affordable Route to a Degree?

### *For many students, living at home is key to keeping community college affordable*

SACRAMENTO — September 19, 2008 — Research by the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) has shown that costs of community college in the past decade have risen faster than inflation. Community colleges are becoming less affordable for families in the lowest income brackets, whose incomes have not kept up with inflation.

CPEC — the state agency charged with conducting independent analysis of higher education issues — reports that living expenses, not tuition or books, are the largest part of the cost of attending community college.

Commission members will discuss the implications for college affordability on September 23, the first day of CPEC's quarterly two-day meeting in Sacramento.

In 2005, a year at one of the state's 110 community colleges cost \$7,000 for a commuter student living in a parent's home. This includes \$2,450 for food, \$1,890 for other living expenses, \$980 for transportation, \$910 for books and supplies and \$770 for tuition. Fees and books combined are about 25 percent of the total.

It has become harder for students to work their way through college. A summer or part-time job used to pay more than enough to cover expenses for a commuter student at a community college. In 1975, a student working over the summer as a retail sales clerk could earn \$2,300 — well over the \$1,600 needed to pay expenses for the year.

Wages for low-skill jobs have not kept up with college costs. Today, a similar 12-week summer job pays only about 60 percent of the \$7,000 needed to pay for community college.

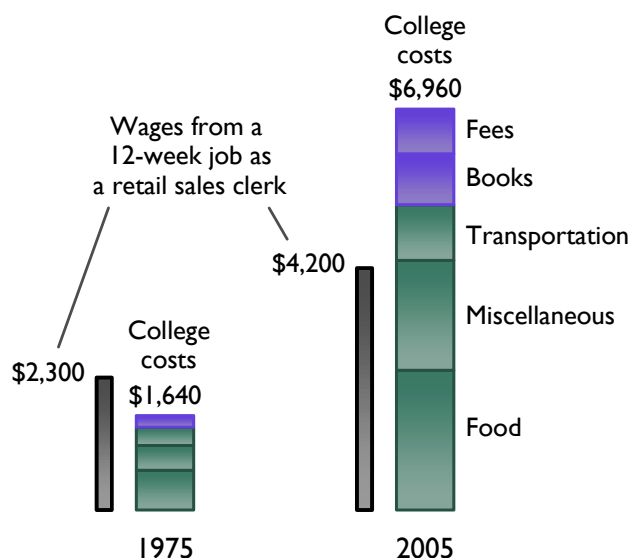
"Students from working-class families are being priced out of college," said Commission Executive Director Murray J. Haberman. "Even though community college is the most affordable route, so many students can't pay their way through school with a part-time job. Instead, they are relying on their parents to provide financial support."

—MORE—

## Students can no longer pay for college with part-time jobs

Annual costs for a commuter student at a community college and wages from a summer job

In 1975, a 12-week job as a retail sales clerk would pay well over what was needed to pay a commuter student's costs for a year. In 2005, a similar job would pay only about two-thirds of a year's costs.



If a student's family absorbs the transportation and food costs, the annual cost of a community college education drops to \$3,600. This is still a significant burden, equating to seven weeks of income for a family in the lower-income brackets.

Commission Chair Olivia Singh noted, "Living costs are most of the cost of a community college education. It's important that students get the counseling they need so they can complete their studies in a timely manner and do not build debt."

This report is available at [www.cpec.ca.gov/agendas/agenda0809/item\\_08.pdf](http://www.cpec.ca.gov/agendas/agenda0809/item_08.pdf).

Data tables suitable for reproduction are available upon request. Interviews with research staff: [press@cpec.ca.gov](mailto:press@cpec.ca.gov) or 916-445-1000.

### Related Report

***Who Can Afford It? How Rising Costs are Making College Unaffordable for Working Families.*** June 2008. 8 pages. <http://www.cpec.ca.gov/completereports/2008reports/08-10.pdf>.